

**BEST PRACTICES OF TRANSLATING CHINESE MEDICINE MATERIAL BY ENGLISH-SPEAKING  
PRACTITIONERS: A QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW STUDY**

by  
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COMMITTEE CHAIR: Dr. Thomas Kouo, DAOM, L.Ac.

COMMITTEES: Dr. Sonya Pritzker, Ph.D., L.Ac.

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**Abstract**

**Background:** It is estimated that there are between 10,000 to 12,000 volumes written over the last 2,500 years about Chinese medicine in Chinese. Most English-speaking students and practitioners lack the ability to read Chinese and, therefore, cannot access this source material directly relying instead on a handful of English translations.

Over the past several years, several English-speaking practitioners of Chinese medicine have begun to translate Chinese medicine sources into English. These practitioner/translators (PT) offer the profession not only deeper insights into the medicine itself, but their experience will help to inform the best practices of translating Chinese medicine material into English.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to interview English-Speaking Chinese Medicine practitioners who translate Medical Chinese material, identify and report on their best practices.

**Methods:** A qualitative research design drawing upon a semi-structured interview process was used. Five qualified interviewees were asked 11 open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted either at

the translator's office or by phone, and lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour in length. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

**Results:** After a thematic analysis of the interview findings, five best-practice guidelines for the translation of Chinese medicine material by PT's emerged: a focus on intensive and on-going tutoring as way to learn and practice translating medical Chinese, several years of dedication to the endeavor, the skilled use of the most up-to-date resources, having a terminology set in mind and having work checked by an informed native speaker.

**Conclusion:** While this study revealed five best practices that PTs use when translating Chinese medicine source material, further research with more participants is required to understand the complicated translation process.